

9 05-GS-60 VOTED: The Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ votes to adopt the resolution,
10 “A Call for Truth Telling and Standards of Ethics in Public Life,” as amended.

11

12 **A CALL FOR TRUTH-TELLING AND STANDARDS OF ETHICS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

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14 WHEREAS the Holy Scriptures of the Judaeo-Christian tradition proclaim that God is a God of truth, who abhors
15 falsehood and deceit (Psalms 5:51-52; Isaiah 45:18-19; Jeremiah 9:2-6; Zechariah 8:16-19; Romans 1:18) and the
16 Holy Spirit is characterized as “the spirit of truth” (1John 4:6); and

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18 WHEREAS the Scriptures counsel that truth is a foundational ingredient of public life, that without truth there is no
19 justice and without justice there is no peace (Isaiah 59:12-15; Jeremiah 5:1-3; Micah 7:1-6); that the credibility and
20 trustworthiness of leaders is directly related to their honesty and believability; and that it is the trust which sets folk
21 free (John 8:32); and

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23 WHEREAS the Gospel calls Christian people and churches to seek truth together; it envisions the healthy
24 community of humanity as one in which what is spoken to one another – in love – is the truth (Ephesians 4:15, 25;
25 Zechariah 8:16), and in which love is not an empty word, but demonstrated to be true by action (! John 3:18); and

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27 WHEREAS the ninth of the Ten Commandments, “You shall not bear false witness,” is directed to courts of justice
28 and the realm of public life as well as interpersonal relationships; and

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30 WHEREAS the Hebrew prophets specifically call religious, civic, and business leaders to account for withholding
31 and distorting truth and intentionally deceiving their people (as in Ezekiel 13 and 35; Amos 5; Micah 7); “for truth
32 stumbles in the public square” (Isaiah 59:14); and

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34 WHEREAS the speech and conduct of civic as well as religious leaders model the behavioral expectations of a
35 society to the young who grow up in their midst to be their successors; and

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37 WHEREAS the houses of Congress of these United States of America have, in their wisdom, enacted legislation
38 which upholds truth in advertising and trust in lending and have established standards of ethics for the conduct of
39 their own members and their own affairs; and ON THE OTHER HAND,

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41 WHEREAS in February 2005, the House of Representatives retreated from the enforcement of its own standards of
42 ethics, replacing the leadership of its Ethics Committee in an apparent act of punishment for upholding those
43 standards; and

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45 WHEREAS many persons believe that the President and Vice-President of the USA and other government leaders
46 have repeatedly twisted and covered up trust and fabricated falsehood in such matters as Iraq’s possession of
47 weapons of mass destruction, the cost of the war in Iraq, the magnitude of the public debt, the impact of cuts and
48 increases in federal taxes and budgets, and the financial state and future of the Social Security system; and

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50 WHEREAS the news media aid and abet the distortion of truth by their manipulative practices of selective reporting
51 and sensationalizing in broadcasting and print; and

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53 WHEREAS the Church itself has not been exempt from the sins of deception, cover-up and falsification, even of the
54 truth of the Gospel;

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1 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ declares its
2 abhorrence of government by deceit and falsehood and the violation and relaxation of standards of ethics for
3 Congressional and other public leaders, and confesses its too often complicity in such deception and unethical
4 behavior through its own indifference and silence; and

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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon its
7 leaders and its local churches to

- 8 • devote time to study and discuss and pray over the issues of truth-telling and ethical behavior in public life
9 as well as the life of the church itself, recognizing that many matters are very complex and that truth is
10 often not easy to discern;
- 11 • uphold truth-telling and stated standards of ethics in the conduct of their own affairs and to acknowledge
12 their own sins of commission and omission in the telling of the truth and upholding of ministerial and
13 congregational ethics;
- 14 • examine routinely the statements and publications of elected and appointed officials and offices in all areas
15 of government, and the ethics of their behavior, and communicate to said officials and offices questions of
16 apparent deception, challenges of outright distortion and falsification, and perceptions of the violation of
17 stated standards of ethics in the conduct of their affairs (“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for
18 because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.” (Ephesians 5:6); and
- 19 • hold the media accountable for manipulations, distortions and omissions of the truth by sending letters to
20 editors and station managers.
- 21 • Communicate to the FCC and appointed and elected officials the importance of diverse sources of news
22 rather than increased concentration of the media because truth is best protected when multiple avenues of
23 investigation and expression are available.

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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests that its
26 officers communicate this Call to Truth-Telling and standards of Ethics in Public Life to:

- 27 • the local churches, Associations, Conferences and clergy of the United Church of Christ
- 28 • the President of these United States of America
- 29 • the Senators and Representatives who make up the Congress of the United States
- 30 • the editors of the major newspapers and managers of the major television and radio stations in our nation.

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32 Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds
33 available.